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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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A-ONE #0215   04/14/00

~ Gates Does PR Spots!   ~ People Are Talking!   ~ Milan II News!
~ New Sleek HP Notebooks ~ The MIDI-3 Released!   ~ New Web Security!
~ Lord of the Rings!   ~ Jaguar Hyper Force Out ~ Web Tracking Fight
~ E-tailers Demise Soon! ~ IE 5.5 Browser Blasted ~ Soc. Sec. Benefits

-* WindowsMe Includes IE Browser *-
-* Gnutella Creates New Piracy Bonanza *-
-* Microsoft May Be Stripped of Browser Rights *-

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Unfortunately, there are no cures for allergies. They're still bothering me
although some medication has reduced some of my symptoms. However, I've
felt better! Weatherwise, it's been a "good" week because of the rain and
wind - it's held my allergies down somewhat. Still, I'm looking forward to
the warm weather so I can work in the yard. Allergies be damned, I'm not
going to allow them to ruin an enjoyable pastime!

Not much else happening. It will be another month before we learn the fate
of Microsoft. It's anybody's guess as to what type of "punishment" will be
meted out.

It's almost like an everyday occurrence these days in which we learn of a
new business taking to the internet. Is it a current fad, or is the web the
marketplace of the future? I don't know. I see advantages to having a
presence on the web, but I just don't see retail on the internet as
replacing physical stores, as a rule.

While buying something online is a terrific convenience, as a consumer, I
want to be able to see, touch, and try a product I'm considering purchasing
in many cases. Have I been an online consumer? Yes. But for things I
might not readily find in a store, or in one that is convenient for me.
I've purchased pet products for my dogs. I've purchased software for my PC
(getting an online discount). But other than those, I've done little buying
from internet sources. I guess we'll have to wait and see.

Until next time...


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                        Milan II Announcement

Yesterday Milan released quite a bit of information regarding the upcoming
Milan II. Ali Goukassian explains the new concept, distribution plans, the
new release date, appearance of the machine and hmm, some more smaller
details.

You can read the English version on MagiC Online:

http://bengy.atari-computer.de

Take care,
Bengy
--
Kevin Savetz <savetz@northcoast.com>
Moderator of news:comp.sys.atari.announce -- Atari computer news

ANNOUNCING THE RELEASE OF MIDI-3

MIDI-3 is a 3 MIDI output expander which attaches to the serial (modem)
port of an Atari ST computer. When used in conjunction with MIDI sequencer
programs such as Notator and Cubase, MIDI-3 provides 3 extra independently
addressable MIDI outputs in addition to the Atari ST's standard MIDI output.

MIDI-3 is fully compatible with the original C-LAB EXPORT expander (no
longer available), and works with any software that supports EXPORT.

SUMMARY OF FEATURES

* Provides 3 extra MIDI outputs on Atari ST or comparable computers.
* Attaches to the serial (or modem) port.
* Fully compatible with EXPORT.
* "Plug and play" installation.
* No external power supplies or other connections are required.
* Available in cased (external) and uncased (internal) configurations.
* Very compact dimensions.

PRICING AND AVAILABILITY

MIDI-3 is available immediately in cased and uncased configurations. The
cased configuration is suitable for external connection to a computer,
while the uncased configuration would be useful for mounting inside a
recased Atari ST.

Pricing for the MIDI-3 in New Zealand Dollars is as follows:

MIDI-3 cased: 110 NZD (40 GBP, 60 USD)
MIDI-3 uncased: 100 NZD (35 GBP, 50 USD)

Figures in Great Britain Pounds and United States Dollars are approximate
and for reference only.

Quantity discounts are available in quantities starting at 5 units.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information, contact:

Mario Becroft
PO Box 332
Kumeu
Auckland 1250
NEW ZEALAND

Telephone: +64 9 412 9700
Email: mb@gem.win.co.nz .

For further information on MIDI-3, photographs and details on worldwide
resellers please consult the following WWW page:

http://gem.win.co.nz/mario/hardware/midi3.html

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                    PEOPLE ARE TALKING
                   compiled by Joe Mirando
                    jmirando@portone.com
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Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone and I find
myself sitting here in front of another blank page. They say that the
hardest part of writing is putting those first few words down on paper.
And I thought that I had solved that problem by eliminating the paper.
<grin>

At any rate, before we get to the "nuts and bolts" part of the column
(which is going to be a little on the short side this week), I'd like to
give you a little update on the TEAM ATARI SETI@home search group. As of
now, there are 37 members. I had hoped for more than that by now, but
hey, I'm not complaining. Each of us does what we can.

Oh, before I forget, I should probably explain what SETI@home is for
anyone who's not familiar with it...

In a nutshell, SETI@home is what is known as a "distributed computing"
project. Computer users like me allow their computers to obtain data
from a central source and perform calculations on it during spare CPU
time. When the calculations are complete the data is returned and a new
packet of data is taken for another round of processing.

In this case, the data being processed is from the Arecibo radio
telescope and it's being checked for possible signals from an
intelligence outside of our solar system.... That's right, we're looking
for ET's phone number. <grin>

As I was saying before, there are 37 members of TEAM ATARI, and we have
contributed more than 15 years of CPU time to the task. That's not a lot
of time compared to the whole (which is over 250,000 years of CPU time).
But that's from a pool of almost two million participants, so we're not
doing too bad.

The only downer is that you can't participate with an Atari computer.
But if you've got a PC or a Mac... or maybe a spare Cray SuperComputer
laying around idle, please check out SETI@home in general
(http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu) and feel free to join TEAM ATARI.
(http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/cgi?cmd=team_lookup&name=team+atari)
.

Well, let's get on with the internet stuff.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Martin Graiter asks about two of my favorite subjects (the Milan II and
Linux) in one question:

"Does anyone know what happened with the SuSE Linux port to the Milan II? And what's up with the Milan II itself? Is it available yet?"

Dr. Uwe Seimet tells Martin:

"No, it isn't [available yet]. And regarding a Linux port I never heard of SuSE planning anything like this."

'Dan' tells Uwe:

"It was announced twice in the German mag STComputer. Once in an Editorial (I think of STC November 99) and once in an article. Suse would have bought 4 Hades 060 computer to port Suse Linux to the Milan 060 (which wasn't yet available at that time)."

If you've ever browsed EBay with CAB, you'll be interested in this post from Dan Ackerman:

"I thought I'd pass this on before the storm came.

Ebay has changed their bidding system. I've gotten a report that it doesn't work with my CAB.OVL. However I did a test and just make certain you don't have an Ebay cookie and that you have cookies turned off. I was able to bid with no problems with this configuration.

I might be jumping the gun, but I thought I would pass this information on to everyone."

If you've tried the browser known as Draconis, you'll appreciate this post from Al Ferrier:

"I saw someone's posting on here the other day and thought I'd have a bash at this here Draconis net suite thing. After several hours of wrestling with the configuration - despite the wizard with it - I enlisted some help from the postee and also from the developers.

I did as I was bidden and deleted it all to re-install on my boot drive (C:/). The developer then said that I had to disable STing completely (i.e in the Auto folder as well as in the CPX) and so I tried this. The ongoing problem I've found, despite this, is that Draconis's dialer handles the connection to my ISP ok and logs on, there seems to be very little going on after that in the way of data transmitted or received. I tried to check my mail with Marathon Mail with no joy and then tried to surf with The Light of Adamas (pretentious name) the web browser but sod all happens. The modem lights flash a bit initially but then, like Craven Cottage after the Super Bees have stuck a fifth goal on them, 'it's all gone quiet over there...'.

So, if there's any Atarian who preferably speaks English as a first language - these things can lose something in translation! - I'd like to hear from them for some ideas, especially if they've got there Draconis setup running ok. Also a word to Draconis's developers: why in God's name didn't you make your package STinG compatible? It is inconvenient to have to disable a *working* connection in order to use your clients!

I'm all for encouraging new net clients for our platform but when
they're up against such stiff competition as POPwatch, NEWSie
and CAB, it would be a good idea to have them actually working!"

Jorgen Nyberg tells Al:

"English isn't my first language but I'll answer anyway. I installed the
latest demo on my Milan (the milan version), and to my surprise it
worked directly, didn't disable Sting, worked regardless. But one
thing I did was that I didn't install the dialer accessory, used the
prg instead. As I said it worked straight away but was slow and it
still is missing a lot of HTML tags..."

Roger Ryan posts:

"Be gentle, I am a newcomer....

Is there a FAQ I should be looking for before I start asking stupid
questions?"

Edward Baiz tells Roger:

"Not really. Just ask away. No question is too stupid. I have asked a lot
here and have been helped."

Nicholas Bales, The Keeper of the FAQ, tells Roger:

"Yep, the Atari ST Quick FAQ: http://bales.online.fr/atari

There is no such thing as a stupid question!"

Walter Cole asks for help with his ZIP drive:

"I have been using a ZIP 250 at the end of a SCSI chain of two
SyQuest EasyFlyer 230s quite happily for many months. However, I had
to leave the ZIP unterminated, in spite of the Iomega manual, or the
drive didn't show up at bootup time.

My setup up is 1040STe>ICDLINK>terminator>SyQuest230>SyQuest230>
ZIP250 (unterminated.

Quite recently the ZIP has developed a strange and annoying
characteristic: it keeps ejecting the disk, no matter when I try to
insert it. The drive shows up under ICDBOOT.PRG but no partitions, of
course. I've tried inserting the disk at several times during the
bootup process and after, without success. I tried switching in the
ZIP's own termination, or adding an external terminator, and all that
happened is that the ZIP didn't even show up on bootup.

Under the circumstances, the ZIP drive is pretty useless. I wouldn't
be able to use later versions of HDDRIVER (which I don't have) to
modify the drive's parameters (like changing the 'sleep' period), if
there are no partitions available--or could I? I do have ver. 6.1 of
HDDRIVER, but I haven't tried it out to see if it would work.

Anyone, perhaps Uwe Seimat, have any suggestions?"

Derryck Croker tells Walter:

"Have you tried other disks? I wouldn't mind betting that the drive is

rejecting the disk because of some fault, imagined or not.

Does the disk still eject if you load it into the drive with the computer
switched off? If so, then you know what the problem is."

Well folks, I told you that it'd be a short column this time around.
That's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same
station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - 'Bust-A-Move 4'! Songbird News!
   """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Jaguar Hyper Force!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
   """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

                    Acclaim Entertainment Spreads Puzzle-Fever
                       To Sega Dreamcast With Bust-A-Move 4

Club Acclaim, a division of Acclaim Entertainment, Thursday announced the
upcoming June 1st release of Bust-A-Move 4 for Sega Dreamcast.
Bust-A-Move 4 marks the premier appearance of the well-established
Bust-A-Move franchise on Sega Dreamcast and will be priced to sell at a
suggested retail price of under $30.

The addictive gameplay of the Bust-A-Move series has been a big hit on the
Nintendo 64, PlayStation and Game Boy platforms,'' said Douglas Yellin,
Brand Director of Club Acclaim. ''Now, Sega Dreamcast fans can enjoy this
immensely popular puzzle game.''

In Bust-A-Move 4, players must free twelve characters trapped in Bubble
World by a mysterious spell cast on them by the magical master Dunk. The
only way to break Dunk's spell is by battling brain-busting boards of
colorful bubbles.

Bust-A-Move 4 features thousands of all-new puzzles with new bubbles and
obstructive blocks, using high-resolution graphics that showcase the Sega
Dreamcast system. Players will experience hours of competitive multi-player
gameplay from exciting game modes including: Challenge; CPU; Head-to-Head;
and Win Contest, which offers over 1,000 classic puzzles from the
Bust-A-Move series. Bust-A-Move 4's Edit Mode allows players to create
their own mind-popping puzzles and save them to a memory card.

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Songbird Update 4/8/00

                HYPER FORCE SHIPS TO EAGER JAGUAR FANS

The remaining Hyper Force pre-orders and regular orders will ship this
week. Thanks to all the fans who are patiently awaiting fulfillment of
their orders! Hyper Force is a fantastic action/platformer game that has
received very positive feedback from early ship customers. Order your
copy today!

THE WAIT IS ALMOST OVER

Jaguar fans have been anxious to receive a certain game since it was
confirmed for release in 1999, and the wait is almost complete: things
look good for a May 2000 release of Skyhammer. Despite continued high
component prices, Songbird is committed to releasing this game to the
benefit of Jaguar fans everywhere at the announced price point.

Therefore, now is the time to get your pre-order balance in to ensure
the quickest shipment of Skyhammer when it becomes available. If you
pre-ordered by Nov 1st, 1999, you owe $44.95 plus shipping. All other
pre-orders owe $54.95 plus shipping. Finally, regular orders placed now
are $79.95 plus shipping. Shipping is either $5 USA/Canada or $8
international. Please be sure to enquire at songbird@atari.net if you're
not certain what amount you owe.

Sincerely,

Carl Forhan
Songbird Productions
http://songbird.atari.net

                Songbird Announces Future Atari Lineup

SONGBIRD ANNOUNCES FUTURE ATARI LINEUP

April 14, 2000

For immediate release:

ROCHESTER, MN -- Songbird's fourth new Jaguar title in six months isn't
even out the door yet as word of more Atari Lynx and Jaguar projects has
surfaced. Carl Forhan, owner of Songbird Productions, remarked, "The
response of fans thus far to new Lynx titles and particularly in recent
the months to the new Jaguar titles has been substantial. I'm thrilled

to have been a part in bringing out some great games that might have otherwise been lost forever, and equally exciting is the opportunity to discuss some future projects for the Atari world."

Heading up the list is Cybervirus for the Atari Lynx. This incredible 3D mission-based action game will be a hit with every Lynx fan, since it's based on the same game engine that gave Lynx fans BattleWheels. Next on the list is Championship Racing, a cool super-smooth overhead racing game featuring multiple tracks, tight control, and multiplayer options! Finally, Planar Wars 3D (working title) -- a game that puts you in the cockpit of the last surviving defense starship -- and Ultravore -- an explosive comlynxable fighting game -- will give Lynx fans even more to look forward to down the road.

At press time, Songbird hopes to have at least one new Lynx game completed in time for CGE2K but further details were unavailable.

Lest Jaguar fans lose hope, several future Jaguar projects are also under consideration. One potential bright spot appeared recently as Songbird acquired complete rights and source to the Virtual VCS, which emulates the classic Atari VCS (or 2600) games on the Jaguar platform. Additionally, Songbird has prototyped and will be producing a Rapid Fire Controller for the Jaguar. This controller has been a hit with early testers, and greatly enhances the gameplay in button-mashing games like Raiden and Zero 5.

New pages have been added for several upcoming releases on the Songbird web pages. Be sure to check out:

http://songbird.atari.net

for the latest information! And be sure to stop by the Songbird booth in CGE2K (http://www.cgexpo.com).

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Microsoft May Be Stripped of Browser Rights

Microsoft Corp. may be stripped of the rights to its Internet Explorer Web browser as part of the remedy in the government antitrust case it lost earlier this month, the Wall Street Journal reported in its online edition on Monday.

The Journal, citing people close to the case, said the government is considering a proposal that would force Microsoft to grant royalty-free licenses to Internet Explorer, opening the programming code to customers

and computer makers.

U.S. District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson has ruled that Microsoft broke U.S. antitrust law by illegally abusing its monopoly power over the operating system for personal computers. A hearing on remedies in the case is scheduled for May 24.

Restrictions on Microsoft's Office software products and its Windows 2000 server software are also being considered, the report said.

Microsoft's Gates Takes Message to Television

Bill Gates is stepping up Microsoft Corp.'s public relations effort in the wake of a ruling that the software giant broke antitrust laws, taking to national airwaves to defend the company as a friend of consumers.

The 30-second commercial started airing on Thursday evening and will be seen during prime time television shows and events such as the Masters golf tournament, Microsoft spokesman Dan Leach said on Friday.

In the spot, Gates does not mention the antitrust lawsuit filed by the U.S. Justice Department, but instead discusses how he thinks his Redmond, Wash.-based company has helped consumers.

''Twenty-five years ago my friends and I started with nothing but an idea -- that we could harness the power of the PC to improve people's lives," Gates says in the ad.

''Since then it's become a powerful tool that has transformed our economy and had a profound effect on how we live and how our children learn.

''Now our goal at Microsoft is to create the next generation of software, to keep innovating and improving what we can do for you. The best is yet to come," he concludes.

The television campaign follows an open letter that Gates, who co-founded Microsoft and is its chairman, published in national newspapers on Wednesday, two days after a federal judge ruled that the company was an abusive monopoly.

''What we're trying to do with these ads is basically to react to the fact there's been so much news out there about the industry and about Microsoft," Microsoft Chief Operating Officer Bob Herbold told Northwest Cable News.

''We want to basically emphasize with customers and the general public that we're focused on what we're supposed to be focused on, which is innovation and building great products."

Microsoft has said it will appeal the ruling, which it can do after the judge decides a penalty, which could range from a fine to a break-up of the company.

Microsoft Previews New Consumer Version of Windows

Days after a federal judge declared Microsoft Corp. an abusive monopoly, the software giant is giving the world a sneak peek at the latest consumer version of its Windows operating system, which boasts more Internet and multimedia features.

The latest test version of Windows Millennium Edition, also dubbed Windows Me, will be shown off to user groups around the country on Saturday, and shipped to computer makers and sellers next week for testing, Shawn Sanford, group product manager for the consumer Windows division, said in an interview.

Windows Me is scheduled to go on sale in the second half of this year, possibly around the holiday season, Sanford said.

Windows Me is the first significant update to the consumer platform since Windows 98 debuted two years ago, but is not a radical overhaul of the operating system that runs more than 80 percent of PCs in the world.

Instead, with an eye on the booming market for digital entertainment, Microsoft has bundled in new tricks like a fancy media player that can record, store and play CDs, digital songs downloaded from the Internet, and video.

''We looked at what do home users need to do, what do they want to do, and what are the trends?" Sanford asked. ''This is kind of a snapshot of things that will come down the road. These are really good starting points to the future."

Such media software takes clear aim at rivals like Seattle-based RealNetworks Inc., whose RealPlayer and RealJukebox products are widely used but face increased competition from beefed-up Microsoft offerings.

Observers have said tying such software to the operating system might raise the same issues that landed Microsoft in hot water with the U.S. Justice Department after it bundled its Internet browser software with Windows to try to snatch business away from rival Netscape.

A federal judge ruled on Monday that Microsoft abused its monopoly in PC operating systems to harm rivals, notably Netscape.

But Microsoft spokesman Jim Cullinan said the company was confident that its appeal of the ruling would support its right to include new features in Windows.

''The tying issue will be resolved by the appellate court and we are very confident that Microsoft's decision to add features and functionalities to Windows has been great for consumers, developers and our economy," Cullinan said.

''We must be free to innovate and improve our products or else we won't be able to compete. The government and our competitors may want that but consumers and the marketplace do not," Cullinan said via e-mail.

Other new Windows features include a suite of tools to let users edit video recordings and put them up on the Web, echoing a move by Apple Computer Co. to add such software to its popular iMac line of consumer-friendly computers.

''If you think about why people want to take videos, it's not just to take

videos but to share them." Sanford said. "What we are trying to do with MovieMaker (software) is truly expose digital video to the masses."

On the utilitarian side, Windows Me will make it easier to set up home networks and connect gadgets like DVD players, televisions and cameras to the PC.

Citing a growing number of homes with two or more PCs, Sanford said, ''Home networking is growing rapidly right now. It's been around a long time but it's never been easy."

Windows Me will also offer relief for anyone who has wasted hours trying to fix stubborn bugs on their computer.

The system will take ''snapshots" of the system at regular intervals, so if the computer gets bogged down with technical gremlins, it will let a user restore the machine to one of those earlier, healthy states.

Windows Me will be the last consumer platform based on the dated DOS technology. There was speculation that the next version of Windows would be built on the more stable NT code that Microsoft's business platform, Windows 2000, uses.

Sanford said an NT-based consumer platform, code-named "Whistler", was in the early stages of development as engineers tried to figure out how to combine the reliability of NT with the compatibility of consumer Windows, which can support things like games and multimedia better than NT systems.

''Millennium Edition is definitely a step in the process we've always had in the goal of getting all the operating systems on to a common code base," Sanford said.

WindowsMe Includes Intergrated Browser

The new consumer version of Windows hits a milestone with Beta 3 next week. And, yes, Internet Explorer is still part of the product.

Microsoft testers can expect the next milestone next week of WindowsMe, Microsoft's Windows for the home release due later this year.

The third and supposedly final beta version, Beta 3, will be available for testers to download from Microsoft's private tester site some time next week, Microsoft officials said.

On Saturday, Microsoft will demonstrate to attendees of its eXtreme product showcase event in theatres across the U.S., a nearly final version of Beta 3, officials said.

Microsoft has tweaked the feature set a bit since it issued Beta 2 in November. As reported by ZDNet News, the latest betas include a beta version of Microsoft's newly released Windows Media Player 7. Beta 3 also will include Microsoft Movie Maker, technology that users can employ to organize, edit and distribute their video clips.

Microsoft officials declined to specify when the company expects to ship WindowsMe, other than to say the company still believes it will deliver the upgrade to Windows 98 and Windows 98 Second Edition in the latter half

of this year.

Microsoft is moving full steam ahead with plans to deliver Internet
Explorer 5.5, the next version of the company's browser, as a completely
integrated feature of the product, officials reiterated.

Earlier this week, District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson threw into
question whether Internet Explorer and Windows should allowed to be
"tied," when he issued his conclusions of law in the ongoing Department of
Justice vs. Microsoft antitrust case. Microsoft has said it plans to
appeal the judge's findings.

WindowsMe is Microsoft's first purely consumer-focused version of Windows.
It's the final Win9X-kernel-based Windows release, according to Microsoft.
All versions of Windows post-WindowsMe will be built on the NT kernel.

WindowsMe is not slated to be a major upgrade to Windows 98. It will
include enhancements in the areas of Internet connectivity, home
networking, PC health and digital media management, Microsoft has said.

                        Microsoft Browser Blasted

Microsoft Corp.'s latest Web browser, due out later this year, does not
adequately support the software standards on which the World Wide Web was
built, the head of a nonprofit Web developer group said Tuesday.

Jeffrey Zeldman, head of the Web Standards Project, said Internet Explorer
5.5 will introduce a number of new, proprietary technologies, but has yet
to properly implement new standards - the codes that are used to build Web
pages.

IE 5.5 will be bundled with Microsoft's newest operating system for home
computers Windows Millennium Edition.

``If Microsoft does not fully implement these standards, their users will
not be able to properly use some sites on the Web," Zeldman said.

In addition, Zeldman said, because Microsoft is the current market leader
in Web browsers, the omission could force Web developers to make an
uncomfortable choice as to which browser's version of the Internet they
should support.

The criticism by the Web Standards Project comes one week after a federal
judge ruled that Microsoft violated antitrust law through its Internet
Explorer Web browser and other software and business practices.

Shawn Sanford, group project manager for Windows Millennium, said it simply
wasn't feasible to include every standard and insisted Internet users will
be able to access any page on the Web through Internet Explorer.

``Users will have a great Internet experience," Sanford said. ``We don't
have 100 percent compliance with standards, but neither does any other
browser. I would say that we're one of the most compliant browsers out
there."

Zeldman said the latest version of Netscape's browser, Navigator 6.0,
released last week, is designed to uphold all Internet standards, though he

said it still has bugs to be worked out. Also, Microsoft's browser for
Apple Computer's Macintosh platform, Zeldman said, had complete and
well-implemented standards.

''The difference there is in implementation, not intent," he noted. ''We
look at the blueprints, and we don't see these standards in Microsoft's
blueprints for IE for Windows, which is odd since they did a great job for
the Mac."

The Internet standards in question are HTML 4.0, the newest version of the
programming language used to write Web pages, and CSS 1, which governs the
appearance of multiple pages on any given Web site so that they are
uniform.

Congress Plans Vote on Net Taxes

Congress will vote this year on repealing the 102-year-old telephone tax,
extending a moratorium on new Internet taxes beyond 2001 and permanently
banning taxes on charges for Internet access, House Speaker Dennis Hastert
says.

In a draft speech to be delivered Monday in Chicago, the Illinois
Republican said the votes will underscore the GOP as prime supporters of
tax relief and electronic commerce. House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt,
D-Mo., recently spoke in favor of a similar approach as both parties jockey
for support in the high-tech industry.

''No one can seriously believe that House Democrats, who have fought us at
every turn when it comes to reducing the burden of taxes, ... will now turn
around in an election year and promote tax relief and a stable framework
for the new economy," Hastert said in the speech.

''Taxes are an impediment to economic growth," he said. ''Instead of
retarding growth, we must encourage it."

The speaker's remarks were circulated on Capitol Hill Friday shortly after
some of the nation's biggest retailers, joined by state and local
government officials and sympathetic members of Congress, said lawmakers
should reject a federal e-commerce commission report they say gives tax
breaks to business and could lead to a permanent sales tax exemption for
the Internet.

Executives from Target, Wal-Mart, Radio Shack, J.C. Penney and Circuit City
appeared on Capitol Hill with government officials to criticize the
Advisory Commission on Electronic Commerce majority report as unfair to
traditional retailers. They described it as a potential threat to billions
of dollars in state and local sales tax collections that pay for schools,
roads, police and fire protection.

''There should be a level playing field where all retail sales are treated
equally," said James Hale, executive vice president at Target. ''No tax
policy should encourage retailers to avoid contributing to their local
community."

The commission, created by Congress to recommend future e-commerce tax
policy, failed to reach the necessary two-thirds vote for formal
recommendations on most key points. But its six business members, joined by

anti-tax members, won majority approval of proposals to extend a moratorium on new Internet taxes for an additional five years after it expires next year.

It is this last point that opponents say includes special tax provisions that would benefit business members of the panel such as AT&T, MCI Worldcom and America Online while costing states $30 billion a year in lost revenue. They also contend it could lead to a permanent barrier against states extending to Internet commerce their existing sales taxes, which provide about 48 percent of the states' revenue.

''The argument shouldn't be how to favor one form of commerce over another," said Henry Chiarelli, president of RadioShack.com.

Gov. Mike Leavitt, R-Utah, chairman of the National Governors Association and a dissenting member of the e-commerce panel, said if Congress extends the moratorium on new taxes it should also permit states to simplify their sales-tax systems and develop interstate compacts that allow them to collect the money on remote Internet sales. Leavitt proposed that Congress pass a law allowing compacts to be created by Dec. 31, 2003.

Republican leaders on Capitol Hill already are moving legislation that mirrors many of the commission's majority proposals. Senate Commerce Committee Chairman John McCain, R-Ariz., plans votes next week on his bill to extend the moratorium on new taxes through 2006, and support is building for repealing the 3 percent telephone tax and for a permanent ban on taxes on Internet access.

But Sens. George Voinovich, R-Ohio; Bob Graham, D-Fla.; and Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., appeared with Leavitt and the retailers to signal their intention to fight any legislation that might bar states from collecting sales taxes on e-commerce.

E-Tailers Seen Going Out of Business in Droves

The combination of weak financial structure, mounting competitive pressures and investor flight will drive most Web retailers out of business by 2001, a leading Internet research firm said in a report.

Even so, cocksure Web retailers are brushing off predictions of their impending doom, insisting that it is only a matter of time before the tide that has already washed out a handful of them starts to turn in their favor again, said the report issued by Forrester Research Inc.

After interviewing 50 electronic-commerce players, Internet analyst Joe Sawyer and his colleagues at the Cambridge, Mass.-based Forrester, concluded a drastic shakeout is coming soon.

The latest evidence that dot-com retailers are struggling to stay afloat came earlier this month when auditors for Web grocer Peapod Inc., online health firm drkoop.com Inc. and Web music retailer CDNow Inc. questioned each company's ability to continue as a going concern.

''Online retail's honeymoon is over," Sawyer said. ''In the past three months, familiar names like Beyond.com and CyberShop closed their doors to consumers, Amazon.com and Boo.com laid off employees and Wall Street hammered the stock prices of dot-com leaders."

``This isn't temporary turbulence," he said.

He said Internet retailers are being squeezed as their profit margins on sales fall and their expenses rise.

Competition will also intensify, as traditional retailers such as Wal-Mart Stores Inc. and Toys R Us Inc. get their second wind and pursue major Internet initiatives, while financial support will flounder as investors and venture capitalists lose interest, he predicted.

``Online merchants that smugly insist their brands and site design translate into financial assets will only fan the flames of investor scorn when profits don't materialize," he said.

In addition, Forrester predicted consolidation among product categories in three stages: the ``critical" stage, which includes books, music and software; the ``intensive care" stage, which includes pets, toys and consumer electronics; and the ``stable" stage, which harbors apparel furniture and shoes.

``Retail has endured consolidation before," Sawyer said. "These battles produced no more than three dominant victors -- enough players to keep their industries competitive yet still profitable."

Still, few of the retailers interviewed said they were concerned with profitability, as less than 40 percent said they expected to be out of the red before 2002. Many of them are convinced that to focus on profitability would cloud their ability to establish leadership in the market.

So where exactly do these companies expect to get the funds to keep their businesses afloat? Sawyer said money from independent and institutional investors is thinning out, as are funds from venture capitalists.

``Dot-com entrepreneurs tapped eager investors for millions, planted flags in new categories from pets to perfume, and blew their budgets on marketing chatter," Sawyer said. ``Wall Street loved it...But the tide is turning against dot-coms."

And more than one-third of the companies interviewed did not know where they were going to get additional funding.

                    Internet Users Fight Web Tracking

Internet users concerned about privacy are looking to technology, education and government to ease their fears about Web sites that can track their every click.

What people want, say professors, government leaders and business executives who gathered here for a Computers, Freedom and Privacy conference, is the same anonymity they get when they stroll through stores in a mall. "People should be able to control information about themselves," said James Rule, a sociology professor at the State University of New York's Stony Brook campus. "If someone makes money from information about myself, I think I should have a say."

Rule joined about 400 Internet users at the conference here last week to

exchange ideas for ensuring privacy in a medium where Web sites can easily
monitor how visitors spend their time online.

Service Allows Benefit Estimation

The Social Security Administration is offering a new Internet service for
Americans who want to get an online estimate of future retirement benefits.

Three increasingly detailed levels of estimates are available, each
requiring the user to type in more information about themselves. The
simplest, ``quick calculator," asks only for a person's age and
current-year earnings. The most sophisticated requires the user to download
software onto their home computer and allows him or her to try out various
retirement scenarios.

``Our new Internet service ... will accomplish step one of retirement
planning, helping workers to understand the amount of Social Security
benefits they can expect in retirement," said Social Security
Administrator Kenneth S. Apfel.

President Clinton planned to unveil the new Internet service at the White
House on Friday. At the same time, he is scheduled to sign legislation
repealing a Depression-era law that reduces the Social Security benefits of
older Americans who work past age 65.

The new online retirement calculators will not tap into private records
that Social Security keeps about individuals' work and earnings histories.
They rely solely on information provided by online users.

The Social Security Administration met with privacy concerns raised by
Congress and in 1997 dismantled a service giving people the opportunity to
check their Social Security records online.

Starting this year, the agency is providing that information - including
official earnings records and benefit estimates based on them - to all
Americans over age 25 the old-fashioned way: in annual mailings, via the
post office.

On the Net: Social Security's new retirement benefit calculators:
http://www.ssa.gov/retire

New Web Security System Unveiled

A leading cybercrime expert plans to launch a new type of Internet burglar
alarm system Monday that analysts say may raise the bar in the burgeoning
and vital field of computer security.

Unlike most e-commerce security systems consisting of in-house staffers,
security consultant and author Bruce Schneier's new Counterpane Internet
Security, Inc.'s system uses teams of analysts working around the clock in
Mountain View, Calif., and Chantilly, Va., to scrutinize activity logs from
customers' Internet sites.

If the Counterpane analysts notice something fishy at a site - a potential

hacking attempt, for example - they call the customer, alert them to the intrusion and help them plug up the security breach.

HP Set To Release New Sleek Notebook Line

Hewlett-Packard later this month will release a new line of business notebooks equipped with 700-MHz Intel chips, blue cases and 15-inch screens, aimed at bolstering its position in the corporate notebook market.

Next week, the Palo Alto, Calif.-based PC maker will also unveil two new consumer Pavilion models, including one model that will contain a K6-2+ processor that will sell for $999 with rebate, according to people familiar the company's plans.

Notebooks have been a particularly sore spot for HP, long ranked as a top seller of desktops and servers. Over the past three years, however, the company has revamped its notebook organization, slimmed down its product line and focused on keeping prices low. As a result, market share has steadily climbed.

"HP has gotten pretty aggressive on the notebook line," said Matt Sargent, mobile computing analyst with market research firm ARS. "They've kind of been the guy following behind the four big guys, meaning Dell, Compaq, IBM and Toshiba. They've kind of fit into that distant fifth position in the corporate market. But now they're trying to get a new line of products that really challenges that position and gets them more into the realm of a true notebook player."

HP's portable push will kick off Monday with the release of the Pavilion 3215 and 3295 for consumers. The 3215 will come with a K6-2+ processor, Advanced Micro Devices' new notebook chip, and sell for $1,099. For an initial period, HP will offer a $100 rebate. The 3295 will come with a 600-MHz Pentium III and sell for around $2,500.

The following week, the company will come out with the OmniBook 6000, a new line of corporate notebooks to replace the Omnibook 4150, said sources close to the PC maker. The 6000s will add a number of new features and shave off nearly a pound of weight.

"The big story with HP is their quality and their brand," said Terry Nozick, an analyst with Mobile Insights. "They had some mishaps with their early notebooks, but they've made major strides."

The OmniBook 6000 also will be one of the first notebooks shipping with the 700-MHz Pentium III processor, Sargent said. "That kind of breaks a new barrier for HP."

The new model, which will come with a stylized "titanium blue" cover made of magnesium and rubber, is 1.2 inches thick and weighs 5 pounds with a 14.1-inch screen or 5.2 pounds with a 15.1-inch display. Dealers have already started receiving new consumer and corporate models, according to sources.

HP has taken a usual one-size-fits-all approach with the new notebooks. The 14.1- and 15.1-inch display models are nearly identical, Sargent pointed out. Most competitors, such as Dell and IBM, offer either smaller,

lighter models with 13.3-inch displays or more feature-laden and heavier models with 15-inch screens.

The approach of a standard size "makes it a lot easier for a user to pick a system," Sargent said. "These are designed to be feature-rich systems, not ultra-portables by any means."

HP will offer Windows 95 or Windows 2000 with the majority of OmniBook 6000 configurations, as few corporate customers want Windows 98, said a source close to HP. The company also will provide an image creation CD for easily migrating data from the OmniBook 4150 to the 6000.

HP is catching up with Compaq, IBM and others by abandoning PC card modems and network cards in favor of miniPCI.

The OmniBook 6000 will also be one of the few corporate notebooks available with a DVD drive and Windows 2000. DVD driver problems have prevented many manufacturers from widely offering Windows 2000 on DVD models.

Low-end models will come with 500-MHz Celeron processors, with the entry-level portable featuring 64MB of RAM, a 5-GB hard drive, 14.1-inch display, 24X CD ROM drive, 56-kbs modem and Windows 95 for $2,299.

The high-end model comes with a 700-MHz Pentium processor, 128MB of memory, 18-GB hard drive, 15.1-inch display, 6X DVD and Windows 95 or Windows 2000 and sell for less than $4,999.

HP still has a long road to travel, Sargent said. "HP has traditionally had good engineering but they haven't been as strong in the marketing area, where Compaq and Dell have exceeded them."

'Lord of the Rings' Movie Snippets on the Internet

Short sections of film from the fantasy movie trilogy ''Lord of The Rings" are to be released on a U.S. Web site on Friday.

A two minute promotional reel will be released including around 30 seconds of film footage, publicist for the production Claire Raskind told Reuters.

The video is to be released just after midnight on Friday in Los Angeles on the film's official Web site (www.lordoftherings.net).

''They are quick cuts but there are some action scenes and you get a good look at all the different characters," she said.

J.R.R. Tolkien's classic fantasy tale ''Lord of the Rings," voted in one poll as the book of the 20th century, is the story of Frodo the Hobbit in a magical land called Middle Earth.

The books of the trilogy are being produced as separate films, with filming of all three to be completed in New Zealand this year.

The first movie, ''The Fellowship of the Ring," is expected to be released late next year with sequels ''The Two Towers" and ''The Return of the King" following later.

Producer New Line Cinema, a subsidiary of Time Warner Inc. said in 1998 it was committing $130 million to the project.

Software Creates Pirating Bonanza

To makers of music, movies and software, it's like a cancer metastasizing out of control across the Web, an infectious method of thwarting copyright law and undermining big business.

But users and proponents of a subversive little program called Gnutella say it's making the Internet what it was designed to be all along: an easy-to-use and open environment to share information.

Whether or not that information is copyrighted hasn't stopped thousands of Gnutella users from peering directly at each other's hard drives to download whatever's being offered.

''It is like a disease. It's a good one. It's going to help the evolution of humans,'' said Gene Kan, a Redwood City software developer who believes Gnutella will revolutionize Internet use.

Gnutella - which anyone can get free from the Internet and install in minutes - is much more pernicious than a similar program called Napster, which is causing headaches for computer systems administrators at college campuses nationwide.

Napster, which is also free, allows online users to search each others' computers for music stored in the popular MP3 format - a method of copying songs from CDs to hard drives and storing them as easily manageable files.

The Recording Industry Association of America is suing in federal court to shut down Napster, the name of which was derived from a childhood nickname of one of its creators. Meanwhile, several universities have blocked the popular software because its many users downloading sizable audio files have slowed computer systems to a crawl.

''No one is trying to stop technology - all the RIAA and its members are trying to do is to put a stop to a new high-tech type of theft,'' the industry group said in a statement.

But preventing Gnutella's great Internet giveaway may prove more difficult.

As with Napster, once a Gnutella user buys a CD, DVD or software and transfers it to a designated hard drive folder where it can be shared, any other Gnutella user can obtain it and make a perfect copy.

The main difference between the two programs is how searches are conducted. Napster searches go through a central server computer, while Gnutella links the individual users directly, so there are no Internet addresses to which the universities or recording companies can block access.

Gnutella is the sum of its parts: a vast and ever-changing network of people. Like its namesake, the chocolate-and-hazelnut spread Nutella, it spreads fast and easy. Once a search request encounters another online Gnutella user, the application automatically tries to contact every

Gnutella user the first one has ever reached, making potentially thousands of direct simultaneous connections to personal computers.

Gnutella was developed by rogue programmers at Nullsoft Inc., a subsidiary of America Online Inc. who briefly posted the program on its Web site on March 14. Nullsoft makes Winamp, an application that plays MP3-format music files.

It was yanked off the site within hours, but by then numerous copies had already popped up on other Web sites. More permutations of Gnutella now appear daily.

In one test lasting less than a minute, Gnutella spread its tentacles to 1795 other users offering 260,390 files totaling 1.1 terabytes of information, including songs, images, pirated music videos and illegally decoded DVD movies.

A two-minute search for guitarist Carlos Santana offered 768 songs from 1,935 other computer users offering free downloads of every track from his $13.99 Grammy-winning CD, ``Supernatural.'' Adobe Photoshop, a professional image-editing software that retails for $609, was available on the hard-drives of a half-dozen Gnutella users with high-speed Internet connections.

``How users make use of it, I hate to say it's not our problem, but it really isn't,'' said Kan, who runs a Web site promoting one of the many versions of Gnutella now freely available.

How do you track down an infinite, ever-changing, proliferating network of participants in this illegal bazaar, much less sue them?

``The battleground is really between technology and the law,'' said Greg Blatnik, an analyst with Zona Research. ``Technology will be the enforcement before the laws ever catch up to it.''

Some analysts believe the best recourse for entertainment companies may be to flood the Internet with inexpensive versions of their creative content. BMG Entertainment and Sony Music Entertainment plan to offer online versions of some of its artists' work in the coming months, though these songs will have technical safeguards preventing copying.

But that can't protect creative content that's already available. ``The digital cows are out of the barn,'' Blatnik said.

Meanwhile, Gnutella hurts everyone who depends on royalties from their creations, said Jeremy Schwartz, an analyst with Forrester Research.

These ethical quandaries didn't stop 12-year-old Philip Woodworth from downloading songs using Napster while home sick from school last week. The Morgan Hill, Calif., resident had only learned about the program a few days earlier from a friend at school, but said it was easy to get songs by the pop-punk band Blink 182.

``I wanted their CD, but I didn't have enough money,'' Woodworth said. ``I told my parents that would never buy another CD again.''

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